United Nations S/PV.4868

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4868th meeting

Thursday, 20 November 2003, 5.10 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Raytchev
	Cameroon	Mr. Banoum
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzún
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

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03-62454 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 5.10 p.m.

Expression of farewell to Mr. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

The President: I understand that this is the last meeting of the Security Council at which our colleague Ambassador Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Permanent Representative of Mexico, will be present. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the members of the Council, to pay tribute to Ambassador Adolfo Aguilar Zinser for the contribution that he has made to the work of the Council, in particular the Sierra Leone sanctions Committee.

As a member of the Council, he has distinguished himself with his intense interest in the role of the United Nations in post-conflict situations. In April this year he made that issue the main theme in wrapping up his presidency. As a result, the Council held a constructive debate on the importance of restoring security conditions, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, institution-building and the socio-economic reconstruction in States emerging from conflict.

As the Chairman of the Sierra Leone sanctions Committee, he not only worked energetically to fulfil the mandate of the Committee, but he led the Security Council in taking a comprehensive approach to Liberia. He also provided effective leadership to the Security Council's mission to Guinea-Bissau, which was greatly appreciated by all of his colleagues.

In bidding Ambassador Aguilar Zinser farewell, I wish him, on behalf of Council members, all success in his future endeavours.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico)(*spoke in Spanish*): Serving on the Security Council as Permanent Representative of my country has been an unparalleled honour and responsibility. The Security Council is the body which, on behalf of the United Nations and based on the United Nations Charter, takes the most important decisions for the preservation of peace and security in the world. From Mexico's standpoint, and that of my delegation, the Security Council is and must be the body that identifies the collective interests of all States and it is the organ that must act to preserve the vitality of international law.

I wish to express my personal gratitude to you, Mr. President, and to all the members of the Security Council with whom I have worked during these nearly two years on the many tasks that have gathered us together, and on which we have had discussions and in most cases agreed. In these two years we have succeeded in fashioning an increasingly strong Security Council.

I also want to express my gratitude to the teams of all of the Member States of the Security Council with whom we have had the privilege of working and in particular, to the Secretary-General who is our guiding light in this Organization. We thank him for the leadership with which he has inspired our work. Our support and love go to the United Nations and to his team. I also want to thank Joseph Stefanides, Norma Chan, Alek Martinovic, Shola Omoregie, Troy Setiawan and certainly I am forgetting some names. I want to thank everyone with whom we have worked on a daily basis and on the two occasions when Mexico presided over the Council during this period.

Very special thanks go to the interpreters as well, who had to decipher our hieroglyphics on many occasions and who helped us express our views to the members of the Council here in this Chamber and to understand each other's views here, as well as in the informal meetings.

My appreciation also goes to the Security team at the United Nations. I want to officially tell Rocky that Mexican coffee will continue to flow into the Security Council even though I will not be here.

During the two years I have served in the United Nations I have had an exceptional experience. Like many other delegates, the first thing one learns when one arrives at the United Nations is how to criticize it. The second thing you learn is how to defend and cherish it. The third thing you learn is to need it. The United Nations is, indeed, an indispensable organization which is not only composed of its Member nations, but is also an organization that all citizens of the world must feel themselves to be part of.

We, the citizens of the world must be the defenders of the United Nations and must perpetuate its work in civil society. Mexico is a country committed to multilateralism and committed to the United Nations, and it will continue to be committed with the same will and determination and with the same resolve with which I have tried to work in representing my country.

The President: I thank representative Aguilar Zinser, and all of us feel as he does.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting, and I give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: Since this will be the last time I will speak in this Chamber, in the presence of my friend Ambassador Aguilar Zinser from Mexico, let me also say how much we will miss him, his wit, his sense of humour, his independent spirit and his keen sense of justice and fair play. He has made a contribution and I am happy to know that even though he is leaving us, the United Nations and the Security Council, the United Nations will be with him and he will be one of our ambassadors out there, and will speak about the important and indispensable role of this Organization. We will miss you, Mr. Ambassador, and you can leave with the full knowledge that you have made a difference and you have made a contribution.

The Council meets today to mark the completion of one of the largest, most complex and most unusual tasks that was ever entrusted to the Secretariat — the only humanitarian programme ever to have been funded entirely from resources belonging to the nation it was designed to help.

The mandate you gave us to assume temporary custody of Iraq's oil exports and apply the revenue to a humanitarian programme is unprecedented in the history of the United Nations. It was a task that arose from the sanctions imposed on Iraq, also by this Council, after the invasion and occupation of Kuwait in August 1990. At that time, few of us could have imagined that those sanctions would remain in place for nearly 13 years, or the terrible toll they would impose on the health and nutrition of millions of innocent people, particularly the most vulnerable.

As early as 1991, with growing concern over the humanitarian situation in the country, the United Nations proposed measures to enable Iraq to sell limited quantities of oil to meet its people's needs. The Government of Iraq declined these offers contained in Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991). By 1995, with the door to exports and imports closed, Iraq's essential services from electricity to hospital care and education had been severely degraded. Yet, there was still no sign that Iraq would soon comply fully with the conditions the Council had imposed for the lifting of sanctions.

In April 1995, rightly considering that innocent Iraqis should, as far as possible, be spared the consequences of their Government's refusal to comply, the Council adopted resolution 986 (1995) establishing the oil-for-food programme. It was not until May 1996 that the Government of Iraq agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding.

The first Iraqi oil export under the oil-for-food programme was in December 1996 and the first shipments of food arrived in March 1997. Under the programme the Secretary-General was required to supervise the sale of Iraqi oil and to monitor the spending of the proceeds on specific groups and services for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

In nearly seven years of operation, the oil-for-food programme has been required to meet an almost impossible series of challenges, using some $46 billion of Iraqi export earnings on behalf of the Iraqi people. Under it, nine different United Nations agencies, programmes and funds developed and managed humanitarian operations in Iraq, meeting the needs of the civilian population across some 24 economic and social sectors.

During these seven years, the programme delivered food rations sufficient to feed all 27 million residents of Iraq. As a result, the malnutrition rate among Iraqi children was reduced by 50 per cent, national vaccination campaigns reduced child mortality from preventable diseases, and as of today, there have been no reported cases of polio in Iraq for almost three years. Electricity blackouts in Baghdad were reduced under peak summer loads. Clean water became more available for personal use. And the programme enabled the overcrowded schools throughout the country to operate in two shifts instead of three.

Let me stress that the bulk of all the work performed by the oil-for-food programme in Iraq has been carried out by Iraqi nationals working for the

United Nations. I wish to express my gratitude and admiration for the competence, loyalty and devotion of the national staff, many of whom have incurred considerable risks in carrying out the programme. Indeed, a significant number have lost their lives, and I pay special tribute to them.

Let me a'so pay tribute to the international staff who have worked on the programme, and particularly to its Executive Director, Benon Sevan. He has served the Organization in this, as in his many previous capacities, far beyond the call of duty.

At midnight tomorrow, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, we are handing over all these responsibilities, together with the remaining funds and assets — assets ranging from schools to electrical power stations and some $8.2 billion worth of food, medicines and other essential supplies — to the Coalition Provisional Authority.

The actual delivery of those items will continue well into next year. Any unspent or undisbursed amounts will be transferred to the Development Fund for Iraq after the programme closes.

I am glad to say that the Coalition Provisional Authority is making arrangements to transfer most of the 2,500 Iraqis who have been working for the United Nations in the three northern governorates to posts in the local government. I hope their colleagues serving in the centre and the south of Iraq — over eight hundred of them in all — will receive similar consideration.

We take pride in the fact that we have achieved an orderly handover of such a large and expensive programme on time and in spite of the current insecurity in Iraq and the disruptive bomb attack on our headquarters. Especially since the cruel loss of life and injuries on 19 August — not just of our international staff, but of our local staff as well — all of us at the United Nations now feel intimately connected to the trauma that Iraqis are living through day by day. We are closing the oil-for-food programme, but we remain determined to continue helping Iraq's long-suffering people in whatever ways are still open to us, and we are determined to implement the other mandates you have given us.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has heard the Secretary-General's statement and has considered the briefing by the Executive Director of the Iraq Programme on the termination on 21 November 2003 of the United Nations humanitarian programme for Iraq (the Programme) and the transfer of the responsibility for the administration of any remaining activity under the Programme to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq in accordance with Security Council resolution 1483 (2003).

"The Security Council underlines the exceptionally important role of the Programme in providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq under the regime of sanctions imposed by the Security Council on the previous Government of Iraq. Under this unique programme the value of humanitarian goods delivered to Iraq during the period from December 1996 through March 2003 amounted to about $30 billion. Those deliveries made it possible to provide to the Iraqi people essential foods and medicines, as well as to supply various equipment and materials for the key sectors of the Iraqi economy. Purchases under the Programme will in the next few months play a key role in the economic reconstruction of Iraq by providing vital goods in the amount of more than of $6 billion.

"The Security Council expresses its deep gratitude to the Secretary-General, to the Office of the Iraq Programme, to United Nations personnel who worked on the ground in Iraq, and to all other United Nations agencies and structures involved and applauds their commitment and professionalism. It also thanks the Chairmen and members of the 661 Committee, for their dedicated efforts to implement the Programme since its inception and in implementing resolution 1483 (2003).

"The Security Council emphasizes the need for continued international efforts aimed at the reconstruction of Iraq and, in this context, took note with satisfaction of the statements made by the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom on the measures which the

Coalition Provisional Authority intends to take in order to continue the payment mechanisms and deliveries under the Programme.

"The Security Council recognizes the important role of the United Nations in coordinating the termination of the Programme, including the transfer at the earliest possible time of all surplus funds in the escrow accounts to the Development Fund for Iraq.

"The Security Council recalls the vital role foreseen for the United Nations in resolutions 1483 (2003), 1500 (2003) and 1511 (2003), as circumstances permit, inter alia, in the areas of humanitarian assistance, facilitation of economic rehabilitation and reconstruction."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2003/24.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.